

**SYRIAMamun al-Humsi, 45, member of the Syrian Parliament**

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Independent member of parliament Mamun al-Humsi was arrested on 9 August, two days after he began a hunger strike in protest at official corruption and the massive powers wielded by the security forces. He is at risk of torture in custody, especially given his criticism of the Syrian security forces.

Dozens of armed police officers reportedly stormed his office in the National Assembly (parliament) building in Damascus at around 8.30am. The authorities had apparently lifted his parliamentary immunity to issue an arrest warrant. Police later took him to 'Adra Prison, where he is now believed to be held. He has reportedly been denied access to medication for his diabetes, which he takes regularly.

He has been charged with offences including "insulting the constitution, opposing the government and engagement in intelligence with foreign quarters". These offences, which are tried by the Supreme State Security Court, carry sentences of up to 15 years' imprisonment. Amnesty International considers him a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for the peaceful expression of his political opinions.

Mamun al-Humsi, who has represented a Damascus constituency for 11 years, had begun a hunger strike at his office some 48 hours before he was arrested, in protest against the massive powers granted to the security forces, official corruption, and the continued application of the emergency laws. Syria has been in an official "state of emergency" since 1963, under which the authorities have sweeping powers to suppress dissent.

He had issued a statement outlining the reasons for his hunger strike, saying he would continue until his demands were met. He reportedly said he would rather go to jail than abandon the principles that led him to begin the hunger strike. In June 2001 he had called for a parliamentary human rights committee to be set up. He was also apparently active within the newly emerging human rights and civil society movement in Syria.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The state of emergency allows for political opponents of the government to be arrested and detained indefinitely. Political activity is outlawed and no political party or organisation is allowed to function apart from those approved by the ruling Ba'th party. Hundreds of people detained for membership of unauthorized political groups, including prisoners of conscience, are currently held in Syrian prisons. While held incommunicado detainees are tortured routinely and with impunity, especially during interrogation.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English, French, Arabic or your own language:**

- expressing concern at the arrest of Mamun al-Humsi and asking the authorities to release him immediately and unconditionally as a prisoner of conscience;
- seeking assurances that he is being well treated in custody and not tortured or ill-treated;
- urging the authorities to ensure that he is allowed immediate access to his family, a lawyer and any medical care he needs, including medication for his diabetes.

**APPEALS TO:**

His Excellency  
President Bashar al-Assad  
Presidential Palace  
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic  
**Telegrams: President al-Assad, Damascus, Syria**  
**Telexes: 419160 prespl sy**  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

His Excellency  
Nabil al-Khatib  
Ministry of Justice  
Al-Nasr Street  
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic  
**Fax: + 963 11 224 6250**  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

**COPIES TO:**

His Excellency  
Dr Muhammad Harba  
Minister of the Interior  
Ministry of the Interior  
Merjeh Circle  
Damascus  
Syrian Arab Republic  
**Faxes: + 963 11 222 3428**  
**Telexes: 411016 AFIRS SY**  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

His Excellency  
Nasser Qaddur  
State Minister for Foreign Affairs  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Al-Rashid Street  
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic  
**Fax: + 963 11 332 0686**  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

and to diplomatic representatives of Syria accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 22 September 2001.